

Introduction

Preparing Round Rock for the 21st century

1.1 Purpose

The Round Rock General Plan 2000 (hereinafter referred to as the “General Plan” or “the Plan”) is the official policy document guiding long-range planning and community development in the City of Round Rock. Adopted by ordinance, and in accordance with Section 219.002 of the Texas Local Government Code, the General Plan provides the legal basis for Round Rock’s zoning and subdivision regulations as well as other development regulations. The Plan sets forth the major goals and objectives that guide physical growth and community development in Round Rock. It incorporates community values, ideals, and aspirations and represents the community’s vision for the future. Overall, the General Plan acts as a guide for decision-making and is a tool for managing community change and maintaining a desired quality of life.

1.2 Introduction to the General Plan

The General Plan is the first step in reviewing existing planning policy for the City. It is a statement of public policy and forms the foundation of an ongoing planning process and the framework for more detailed plans in the future. Thus, the General Plan, both by definition and necessity, is general in nature, and sets forth the policies upon which future community plans and decisions will be made. While the General Plan is the foundation for the planning process, it is not a rigid document. Circumstances may change necessitating a change in policy inconsistent with ideas espoused in the Plan. In such cases, after careful analysis of new proposals, the General Plan should be amended to take advantage of new or changed conditions.

1.3 Uses of the General Plan

The General Plan has four (4) essential uses:

◆ **POLICY DETERMINATION**

The General Plan includes a broad physical design for the community that provides for an orderly expansion of streets, utilities, and other capital improvements. It also assists in the coordination of public and private expenditures and the equitable cost sharing for capital expenditures.

◆ **POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND COORDINATION**

The Plan includes goals and objectives to guide the decisions of the City Council, the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Development Review Board, the Historic Preservation Commission, and City staff on individual development applications. The General Plan's goals and objectives ensure consistent decisions within the framework of stated City goals and policies.

◆ **COMMUNICATION**

The Plan is a central source that delineates public policy for citizens, elected officials, City staff, the business community, and developers.

◆ **MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION**

The Plan acts as a means to measure and evaluate the changing character and needs of the community. Both quantitative and qualitative information provide a rational and reasonable basis for future community decisions.

Change is inevitable in any community. Round Rock has experienced tremendous growth since the 1990 General Plan was written. Maintaining a desired quality of life while balancing the needs of residents and businesses is a formidable challenge. The General Plan 2000 represents a collective effort by the community to meet this challenge.

1.4 History of the General Plan

The Round Rock General Plan traces its roots to 1969. During that year the City used a comprehensive planning grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to develop the City's first general plan. Bernard Johnson Engineers, Incorporated, was hired as a consultant to write the plan. Although the resultant 1970 Comprehensive Plan was never formally adopted by the City Council, it was, nonetheless, a seminal work. Tangible evidence of the success of the Plan was the development and adoption of the City's first zoning ordinance, a zoning map, and a major revision of the subdivision ordinance. These ordinances helped

establish development review criteria that were orderly, consistent, fair, and predictable. Language from the zoning and subdivision ordinances of 1969 and 1970, respectively, remains integral to current ordinances.

The 1970 Plan also described the major economic forces helping to shape the community. At the time, the Round Rock White Lime Company was the primary employment center in Round Rock, with approximately 100 employees. Prior to 1969, the lime plant covered the area roughly bounded by Interstate 35 to the east, Ranch-to-Market (RM) 620 to the north, St. Williams Drive to the west, and McNeil Road to the south, an area of over 350 acres. The company had been responsible for a large part of previous growth and expected future company employment to increase. Its closure in 1969 due to noncompliance with Texas Air Control Board standards was not anticipated by the City and was not reflected in the 1970 Plan. Ultimately, however, the plant closing produced no detrimental effects. On the contrary, starting in 1972, the Round Rock West subdivision was created out of the vacated plant property. Round Rock West, in turn, acted as a growth trigger, which when coupled with close proximity to an expanding Austin metropolitan area, facilitated the City's expansion. During the ensuing decade from 1970 to 1980, the City grew by 9,929 people from 2,811 to 12,740.

In September of 1979 the Frontiers General Plan was adopted. It included a seven page policy document along with an illustrative land use map to guide future land use and fiscal decisions within the City limits. The 1979 Plan contained sections covering parks, major thoroughfares, and land use. Much of the philosophy of the 1979 Plan was incorporated into a revision of the zoning ordinance in 1981.

1990 marked the first major update of the 1979 Frontiers Plan. One of the most significant aspects of the 1990 General Plan was a firm delineation of the official Round Rock extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). ETJ authority is defined under Section 42.021 of the Texas Local Government Code. In 1990, it was further defined by agreements with neighboring communities, particularly Austin, Leander, Georgetown, and Hutto. Now, for the first time, the City could adopt an authoritative land use map for the entire Planning Area which included both the areas within the present city limits and the ETJ. Whereas previous planning maps were illustrative, the 1990 Planning Area map was well defined and coterminous with other jurisdictions.

The General Plan 2000 continues the evolution of planning in Round Rock. The Plan captures the ideas and conclusions of the community, acknowledges the importance of citizen participation, and addresses community development challenges typically associated with larger cities.

1.5 The Planning Process

The General Plan encompasses goals and objectives affecting the entirety of Round Rock. It was therefore important to integrate all segments of the community into the General Plan 2000 revision. The process included identification of citizen concerns and the creation of a vision for the City's future. Citizen ideas were then used by elected representatives and City staff to devise goals and objectives.

To facilitate the integration of citizen ideas and concerns into the General Plan 2000, the Planning and Community Development Department staff devised a five-step process:

STEP ONE - CITY SEMINAR

This three session staff led educational seminar held in the Spring of 1998 spearheaded the revision effort. It provided citizens with sufficient knowledge of City funding, management, services, and plans to be effective participants in the subsequent Planning and Design Workshops (Step Three). In order to participate in the smaller Planning and Design Workshops, citizens were required to attend all three City Seminar sessions.

RESULTS:

One hundred and thirty citizens attended at least one of the three City Seminar sessions. Sessions were aired on community access television for increased participation. In addition, videotapes of the sessions were placed at the City library where approximately 25 citizens borrowed them for viewing. Of the 130 attendees, 66 were eligible for and chose to continue their participation in the Planning and Design Workshops.

STEP TWO - CITY SURVEYS

Two scientifically conducted telephone surveys were performed in the Spring of 1998 by the polling firm Jeff Montgomery and Associates, Incorporated. The first surveyed attitudes and opinions about City services and Round Rock's quality of life. The second surveyed attitudes and opinions about planning issues in Round Rock. Respondents were selected by means of a random sample.

RESULTS:

Eight hundred Round Rock residents were surveyed, with 400 responding to each survey. Survey responses led to the selection of the four planning topic areas addressed at the Planning and Design Workshops (Step Three). Survey results were also used by the Mayor and City Council to identify goals and objectives for the General Plan 2000 (Step Four). Survey results are available for

review at the Planning and Community Development Department in City Hall, 221 East Main Street.

STEP THREE – PLANNING AND DESIGN WORKSHOPS

In the Summer of 1998, planning consultant, J.D. Wilson and Associates, facilitated six separate Planning and Design Workshops to gather citizen input for the General Plan 2000. The first session was held in the City Council chambers and introduced the four topic areas identified from the City surveys:

- ◆ Community Identity and Appearance
- ◆ Adjacency of Land Uses to Single Family Development
- ◆ Transportation/Roadway Implications for Development
- ◆ Housing Opportunities

Participants viewed a slide presentation of actual developments that illustrated both successful and unsuccessful attempts to address each topic area. Examples were drawn from cities and towns across the United States. Discussion then shifted to a “visioning” exercise where citizens formulated a statement of how they would like Round Rock to be described in ten years. These comments became the basis for a vision statement later refined by the City Council.

After attending the introductory session, participants attended one of four Saturday workshops; each workshop addressed one of the four topic areas. The workshops gave participants the opportunity to address key planning and design issues facing Round Rock. The consultants facilitated discussion among participants and then developed a list of ideas and conclusions that emerged from the discussion.

Finally, a summary workshop marked the completion of this series. Two participants from each Saturday workshop presented their findings to the City Council and the public.

RESULTS:

Sixty-six citizens participated, with an average of seventeen attending each of the four topic-specific Saturday workshops. Each workshop featured a cross section of participants from various neighborhoods and backgrounds. Ideas and conclusions generated at the workshops provided the City Council with a foundation to identify goals and objectives for the General Plan 2000. A summary report of the work accomplished at the Planning and Design Work-shops is contained in Appendix A.

STEP FOUR – COUNCIL GOALS WORKSHOP

In August of 1998, policy consultant, Louis Fox of Urban Advisory Services, facilitated a goal setting workshop for the Mayor, City Council, and staff department directors. Citizen comments from the City surveys and the Planning and Design Workshops were used to identify a broad set of goals and objectives for the General Plan 2000. In addition, the City Council developed a vision statement for the Plan based on input from the Planning and Design Workshops.

RESULTS:

Following citizen feedback from a public hearing, a resolution was approved by the City Council in October 1998 adopting the goals and objectives for the General Plan 2000.

STEP FIVE – EXISTING PLAN UPDATES

Revising the technical aspects of the 1990 General Plan was largely a function of the Planning and Community Development Department. Planning staff also incorporated elements of the City's new Transportation Master Plan into the General Plan 2000 to broaden its scope. In addition, the City's new Parks and Open Space Plan will be incorporated into the General Plan 2000. Upon completion by the Parks and Recreation Department, the Parks and Open Space Plan will become Chapter 9 of the General Plan 2000.

RESULTS:

After citizen review, the General Plan 2000 was formally adopted by the City Council on June 10, 1999 (Appendix B). The Plan reflects Round Rock's history, existing conditions, and its view for the future.

1.6 The Planning Area

The General Plan 2000 study area, hereafter referred to as the Planning Area, is the entire geographic area within Round Rock's city limits and extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

Most of the Planning Area interfaces with the jurisdictions of adjacent communities, including Austin, Cedar Park, Georgetown, Hutto, Leander, and Pflugerville. Thus, the Planning Area chosen for this Plan closely approximates the ultimate city limits for the City of Round Rock. The present city limits and ETJ are shown on Map 1.1. Present city limits encompass 23 square miles while the ETJ includes an additional 47 square miles for a total of 70 square miles in the Planning Area.

Land uses were surveyed in December 1998. Community demographic analysis was based on numerous sources including the following:

- ◆ 1990 U.S. Census
- ◆ Texas State Data Center population estimates and demographic trends
- ◆ Texas Water Development Board population projections
- ◆ Department of Housing and Urban Development demographic estimates
- ◆ City staff housing unit population estimates

1.7 Physical Setting

LOCATION

The City of Round Rock is located in southern Williamson County, fifteen miles north of Austin, the state capital, and ten miles south of Georgetown, the county seat. Williamson County is the northern county of the three-county Austin Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which also includes Travis and Hays counties.

Round Rock is situated on Interstate 35 at the junction of Williamson and Travis Counties. Round Rock lies 186 miles south of Dallas, 178 miles east of Houston, and 96 miles northeast of San Antonio.

Round Rock's proximity to Austin and its location along Interstate 35, often considered the "Main Street" of Texas, provides both growth pressures and opportunities for the City.

TRANSPORTATION

A number of federal and state highways connect Round Rock with Texas' principal metropolitan areas. Interstate 35 links Round Rock with Austin and San Antonio to the south, and Waco and Dallas-Fort Worth to the north. US 290 terminates in Houston and is accessible from Round Rock through Austin. US 79 provides access to east Texas from central Round Rock. US 183, the second major north-south route in the region, some eight miles to the west, serves as a primary carrier and development corridor for the Austin metropolitan area. Its southern segment reaches the Corpus Christi area. RM 620 originates in central Round Rock and extends to Highway 71 and the Highland Lakes area of the Texas Hill Country.

The Union Pacific and Georgetown Railroad companies operate rail lines within Round Rock. The Georgetown line is parallel to and west of Interstate 35. It runs south from Georgetown to a point approximately 2,000 feet north of Sam Bass Road. From that point, the line is under the operation of Union Pacific. The Union Pacific line continues south until the intersection of McNeil Road and Interstate 35 where it connects with an east-west

Union Pacific line. The east-west line runs parallel to McNeil Road and East Palm Valley Boulevard. Union Pacific provides freight service for Round Rock and the Austin metropolitan area.

Other transportation facilities include the new Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, twenty-two miles south of Round Rock, which opened in May 1999. It provides full commercial air services throughout the United States and abroad. The former Robert Mueller Airport in Austin will be reconfigured for a variety of uses. Georgetown and Taylor Municipal Airports lie within a fifteen-mile radius of Round Rock. Each airport can accommodate general aviation.

PHYSIOGRAPHY

The City of Round Rock is situated on the Balcones Escarpment, a geologic fault line that marks the transition from Hill Country to Blackland Prairie. The Hill Country, west of Round Rock, is predominately ranch land and includes a number of major quarrying operations. Much of the land to the east is rich Blackland Prairie and is actively farmed. The City straddles Brushy Creek and three of its main branches: Chandler Creek, Onion Creek and Lake Creek. These streams are associated with substantial floodplains in some areas.

The topography of Round Rock is level to rolling with elevations ranging from 960 feet above sea level in the northwest corner of the ETJ to 650 feet near the eastern city limits along Brushy Creek. The downtown area is approximately 700 feet above sea level.

SOILS

The Balcones Escarpment accounts for the diverse character of the soils in the Round Rock area. The Houston, Austin, and Castephen soils of the Blackland Prairie comprise most of the cultivated area east of the City. These deep soils are high in organic matter and retain moisture. West of the City the surface material consists of the generally thin and stony soils of the Eckrant and Georgetown series. These are underlain by commonly exposed limestone bedrock, characteristic of the Edwards Aquifer.

CLIMATE

The climate of southern Williamson County is temperate, with mild winters and hot summers. The region has a mean annual temperature of 67 degrees, with an average January low of 35 degrees Fahrenheit and an average July high of 97 degrees Fahrenheit. The prevailing winds from the southeast bring warm, tropical air masses from the Gulf of Mexico. These are displaced in the winter months by periodic outbreaks of cold arctic air from the north. Annual precipitation averages 34 inches with virtually none of it falling as snow. The average growing season is 258 days and extends from March through November.

1.8 History

Native Americans were the first to occupy the area, including the Tonkawas, Lipan Apaches, Comanches, and Tawakonis of Caddoan stock. The first Anglo settlers began arriving in the early 1830's and built Kenney Fort, site of the famous Archives War, on the south side of the Brushy Creek. In 1851 the original town, called Brushy, was established on the north side of the creek near the "round rock" where the famed Chisholm Trail crossed Brushy Creek. In 1854, the town of Brushy was renamed Round Rock and continued to serve as a stop on the Chisholm Trail until the early 1870's. In 1876, the residents moved the town three-quarters of a mile east to take advantage of the newly constructed International and Great Northern Railroad Line (later known as the Missouri-Pacific, and then the Union Pacific) which by-passed the "old town." Round Rock was officially incorporated in 1913. The 1920 U.S. Census reported its population as 900. The subsequent fifty-year period was characterized by gradual growth so that by 1970 Round Rock registered a population of 2,811.

Since 1970 Round Rock has experienced a nearly twenty-fold increase in population and is now the largest city in Williamson County. Round Rock, with an estimated April 1999 population of 52,040, has helped make Williamson County one of the fastest growing counties in Texas and the nation. During the 1990's, Round Rock transitioned from a bedroom community of Austin to a major employment center featuring high technology, health services, and light industry. Dell Computer Corporation is Round Rock's largest employer with over 7,000 employees. The number of Dell employees in Round Rock will increase after the completion of the eastern and northern campus expansions. Other major proposed developments in Round Rock include a Scott and White Hospital and regional medical complex, a 7,500 seat convention center/stadium complex that will be home to a AA minor league affiliate of the Houston Astros, and a 307 acre regional shopping and business complex, all of which will further diversify Round Rock's economic base.

1.9 Development Constraints

The constraints on development in Round Rock fall into three categories: jurisdictional, physical, and functional.

JURISDICTIONAL CONSTRAINTS

Jurisdictional boundaries are the first and foremost development constraint on Round Rock. Round Rock's city limits and ETJ abut those of the surrounding cities and towns: Austin to the south and west, Cedar Park and Leander to the west, Georgetown to the north, Hutto to the east, and Pflugerville to the south. The result is a clearly defined and limited

geographic area available for expansion and development. Map 1.1 shows the Round Rock ETJ.

PHYSICAL CONSTRAINTS

The second type of constraint consists of the physical limitations imposed by the creeks and their associated floodplains. Approximately 1330 acres of land within the current corporate area and the ETJ fall within floodplains. Occasional heavy rainfalls in Central Texas saturate and flood substantial areas of floodplain including not only the creek systems of the area but also a number of minor drainage courses feeding the creek systems.

The protection of these drainage areas from development is a prime consideration affecting City growth. Additionally, the primary creeks and their associated floodplains present substantial natural barriers to continuous surface transportation systems. The major floodplain areas are shown on Map 1.1. These physical constraints also provide an excellent opportunity for environmental improvements by utilizing floodplains for open space, trail development, and habitat preservation.

Shallow soils and bedrock, along with the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone, occur in the western portion of the City and its ETJ. Because of the attendant environmental and construction implications, development costs are often higher in the Recharge Zone.

FUNCTIONAL CONSTRAINTS

Functional constraints include existing major transportation routes. Railways and highways act as physical barriers between various sections of a city. These barriers disrupt the continuity of development and, because of their right-of-way requirements, significantly decrease the acreage available for development. In Round Rock, the Union Pacific Railroad, Georgetown Railroad, and Interstate 35 pose formidable obstacles to a unified urban spatial pattern. However, these functional constraints can provide unique opportunities for the economic growth of the City by utilizing these transportation corridors for intensified land uses, such as rail stations, regional shopping centers, or industrial parks.

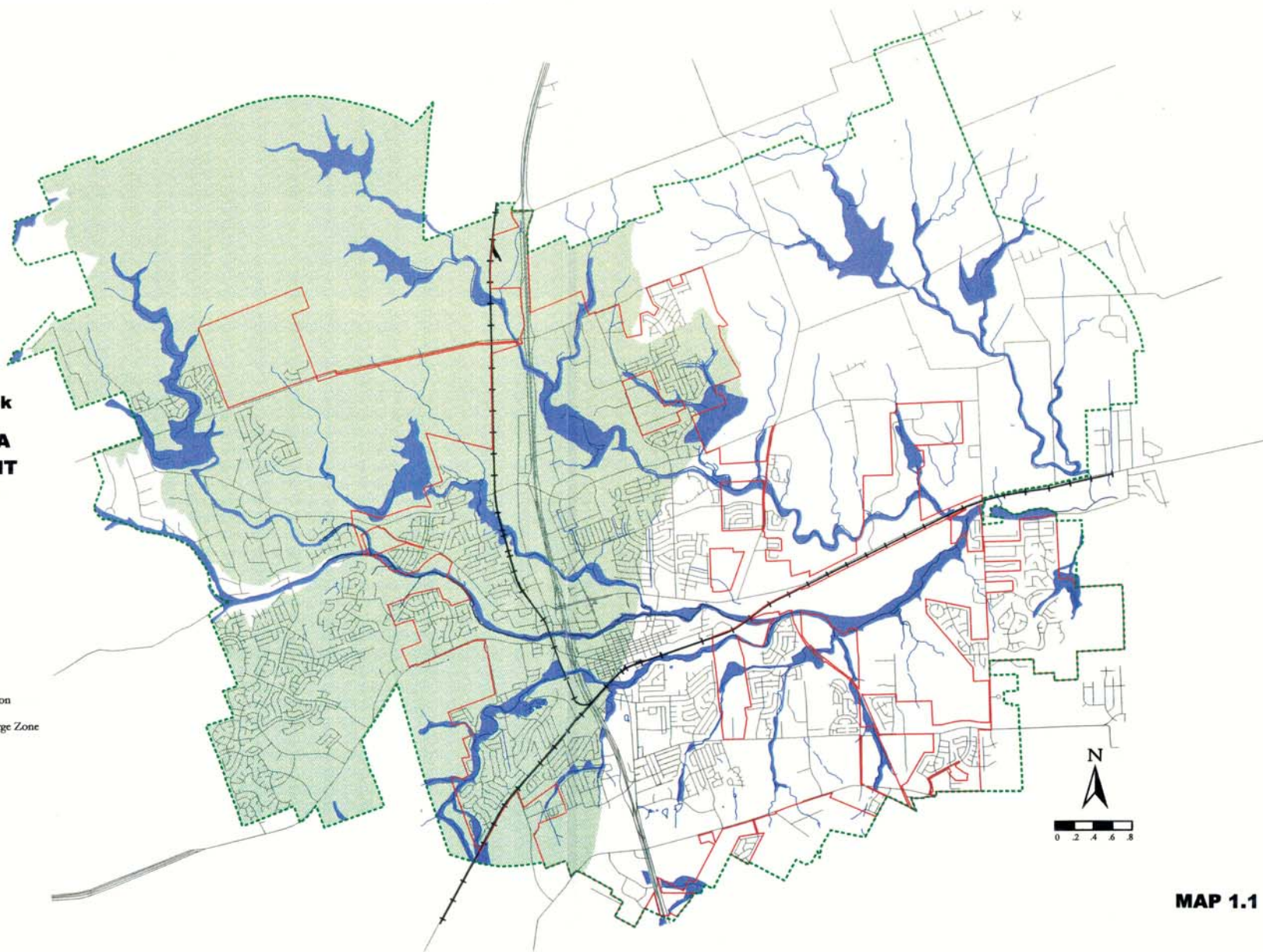


**City of
Round Rock**

**PLANNING AREA
& DEVELOPMENT
CONSTRAINTS**

LEGEND

- Streets
- Floodplain
- Railroad
- Streams
- Brushy Creek
- City Limits
- Extraterritorial Jurisdiction
- Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone



MAP 1.1